UNITED NATIONS

A

General Assembly

PROVISIONAL

A/47/PV.79
18 December 1992

ENGLISH

Forty-seventh session

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

PROVISIONAL VERBATIM RECORD OF THE 79th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Friday, 4 December 1992, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. GANEV (Bulgaria)

- The situation in the Middle East: reports of the Secretary-General [35] (continued)

- Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations [37] (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 35 (continued)

THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST: REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/47/672, A/47/673 and A/47/716)

Mr. HATANO (Japan): Throughout the year 1992 the world's attention has been focused on the dramatic and tragic events unfolding in various parts of the world, particularly in the former Yugoslavia, Somalia and Cambodia. But of no less importance to the maintenance of the world's peace and security is the situation in the Middle East. The region's long history, its richly diverse cultural and ethnic heritage and its important international strategic position make its problems crucially relevant to the entire international community.

Developments in the region this past year have been both encouraging and frustrating. As I survey the region, the area in which there are perhaps the fewest signs of progress is Iraq. Although nearly two years have passed since it was forced to withdraw from Kuwait, Iraq has yet to recognize the territorial integrity of Kuwait and continues its campaign against that sovereign State. And in refusing to comply fully with the relevant Security Council resolutions the Iraqi Government continues to deprive its people of the means to overcome their hardship and rebuild their lives.

In March, and again last month, Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Tariq Aziz, appeared before the Security Council. On each occasion, Japan and the other members of the Council had high hopes that he would convey a message from his Government that it would cooperate so that the United Nations sanctions could be lifted and the suffering of the Iraqi people eased. On each occasion, our hopes proved to have been in vain. Indeed, the Iraqi leadership even suggested that the resolutions calling for the future monitoring of weapons of mass destruction be reviewed.

(Mr. Hatano, Japan)

Iraq appears to interpret the Council's resolutions as attempts to interfere with its domestic policy. It must recognize, however, that the only way to alleviate the suffering of its people is to implement those resolutions. Until it does so there is no possibility that the sanctions will be lifted. Japan once again urges the Government of Iraq to comply fully and unconditionally with all the relevant resolutions without further delay.

In the meantime, the welfare of the Iraqi people remains a matter of great concern. The Government of Japan feels particular sympathy for those in the South and in the North who are being victimized by their own Government. Japan is particularly dismayed by Iraq's unwillingness to export oil, as provided for by Security Council resolution, and provide relief to its people.

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In the meantime, United Nations and non-governmental agencies have been making heroic efforts to ease the suffering of the Iraqi people and they deserve our full support and profound admiration.

On the other hand, we have witnessed promising developments this past year in the ongoing efforts to resolve the Palestinian issue. In view of the profound and age-old mistrust among the parties concerned, the fact that they have continued the talks initiated last year at the historic Madrid Conference is a source of encouragement. Indeed, apart from whatever progress is being made, the fact that the talks have not broken down is a positive demonstration of the political will of the parties concerned to resolve at last this long-standing and vexing issue. Of course, it would be naive to believe that the enmity among the parties could be dispelled in a year or two, but as long as they continue their dialogue the hope will remain alive that a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East region is possible. The people of this region, and especially those of Palestine, have suffered so greatly and for so long; any ploy - either from outside or from inside the region - to wreck the peace process will not be tolerated. Japan will continue to participate in multilateral talks in an effort to contribute to the welfare of all the peoples in the region.

This year the world community again welcomed the release of Western nationals who had been held hostage in Lebanon. I believe that action greatly contributed to the creation of a more favourable atmosphere for peace and stability in the region. On the other hand, there continue to be disturbing reports of the use of violence and the threat of violence in southern Lebanon. Japan deplores such actions, which jeopardize the ongoing peace process. This process offers a precious opportunity to achieve a just,

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comprehensive and lasting peace. Japan urges all parties to end the cycle of violence and take maximum care to ensure that this opportunity will not be lost.

The situation in Lebanon offers hope and promise. The world is pleased to note that Lebanon is now engaged in nationwide efforts under the Taif Agreement for national reconstruction and reconciliation. Japan wishes to encourage all sectors of the population in Lebanon to strengthen that effort and work together to implement that important Agreement.

The policy of the Government of Libya continues to demand the attention of the international community. Its refusal to extradite suspected terrorists demonstrates a lack of regard for international expectations and for public opinion.

Iraq's invasion of Kuwait two years ago has left indelible scars on the hearts of the people in the region. The peace talks have not yet produced results that are reflected in the lives of the Palestinian people. The situation remains a dangerous tinder-box that could be ignited by any careless or seemingly insignificant spark. But for the first time in many years there are signs of progress towards a solution of the situation in the Middle East.

The peoples of the Middle East are thus at a great crossroads; it is up to them to seize the opportunity to restore peace and security to the region. I trust that within their historical, religious and cultural heritage they will find the wisdom to resolve their difficult problems. Japan calls upon the collective membership of this world body to support all efforts that will advance the cause of peace and security in the Middle East.

Mr. YAACOBI (Israel): At the outset I should like to congratulate the Secretary-General, the Security Council and the United States of America on the courageous and moral decision to send troops on a humanitarian mission to Somalia. I wish the mission full success and a safe return home.

The Middle East is undergoing changes which could lead either to peace and progress or to continuing unrest. Yet it remains a region brimming with conflicts, one of which is between Israel and a number of neighbouring Arab States and the Palestinians. But this is neither the primary nor the only conflict in the region. There are other sources of tension in the region such as the actions of terrorist groups; the rise of radical fundamentalism; the clashes in Iraq between the Government and the Kurdish and Shiite minorities; the massive Syrian presence in Lebanon; and the enormous arsenals of weapons in Iran and Iraq. All of these are a threat to the peace of the region and to the prospects for further human and economic development.

The time has come for us who live in the region to address not just the symptoms but the disease. The true way to go about this is to encourage the bilateral and multilateral peace negotiations and to strengthen support for democratization.

We welcome the participation of Syria, Jordan and Lebanon for the first time in direct negotiations with Israel towards peace treaties. This has been our aspiration since the establishment of the State of Israel. For since our rebirth as a State we have been subjected to war and aggression. On 15 May 1948, when the British Mandate in Palestine came to an end, seven Arab

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armies invaded Israel. At the time I was 12 years old. I remember well the fear we had when the invading Iraqi Army was as close as four miles from the village where I had grown up.

In his memoirs In the Cause of Peace, His Excellency Mr. Trygve Lie, the first Secretary-General of the United Nations, described the Arab assault after the founding of the State of Israel as follows:

> "During the next hours and days, events crowded upon us. The Arab States launched their invasion of Palestine with the end of the Mandate. This was [clear] aggression ...". (Trygve Lie, In the Cause of Peace, New York, The Macmillan Company, 1954, p. 173)

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Despite the attacks upon us, we held firm to our hope for peace. That hope was embodied in our Declaration of Independence, which states:

> "We extend our hand to all neighbouring States and their peoples in an offer of peace and good-neighbourliness, and appeal to them to establish bonds of cooperation and mutual help with the sovereign Jewish people settled in its own land. The State of Israel is prepared to do its share in a common effort for the advancement of the entire Middle East."

The road towards the building of a new future for the Middle East passes through peace treaties. We must build a new kind of relationship among the peoples and the States of the region. That will be the main test of statesmanship for the leaders of the countries in our region. In addition, it holds the promise of a breakthrough, away from the apocalyptic dangers of a new confrontation and towards a better life for everyone, including the Palestinians and the Arabs in the Middle East.

Next week the bilateral negotiations will resume in Washington between the delegations of Israel and Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and the Palestinians. The two sponsors of the peace process, the United States and the Russian Federation, have our appreciation and gratitude for their continuing efforts to encourage peace. All of us know that the issues in the talks are complex and that negotiations are taking place after many years of hostility and alienation. However, if all the parties adhere to the conviction that peace is vital, I believe that agreements will be reached and that peace will come.

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As was stated by the Prime Minister of Israel, Mr. Yitzhak Rabin, it would greatly help the peace process if President Assad of Syria and our Prime Minister would meet in Damascus or in Jerusalem to discuss ways to achieve progress towards peace and security. The same appeal has been made to King Hussein of Jordan. On this occasion, I would like to wish him good health and a quick recovery.

While the bilateral negotiations aim to achieve peace treaties and reconciliation among the parties concerned, the multilateral negotiations are an essential step toward building the new Middle East. As outlined in the invitation to the Madrid Peace Conference, the purpose of the multilateral talks is to address issues which are of common concern to all people in the region: arms control, refugees, the environment, water resources and regional economic cooperation. Those are issues whose importance transcends boundaries and conflicts. Israel welcomes the progress made thus far in the multilateral talks, in which the United Nations is a full participant. We hope that the talks will continue to move forward in a positive direction.

The cost of the ongoing situation has been too high for all of us. Consider the burden and the cost of war and hostility, the arms race, and the lost opportunities for economic growth, trade and the development of regional infrastructures. The potential fruits of peace are immense; they include a reduction in the cost of defence and in arms procurement, open borders, trade and tourism, and investment in educational, health and scientific development. Instead of exchanging insults and bullets, we could be exchanging technology and know-how. Instead of investing in the weapons of war, let us enjoy together the prosperity of peace.

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Peace would open up a wide range of opportunities for regional development and cooperation. Arabs and Israelis could mobilize sources of investment and finance to facilitate the creation of a Middle East development bank. We could join in the formation of a Middle East common market. Regional centres dedicated to research in fields such as agriculture, health and energy could be established. Joint projects in managing water resources and combating pollution would help preserve the fragile ecology of our region.

In that connection, I would like to propose the creation of a forum of United Nations ambassadors from the countries of the Middle East. The forum would provide us with a means of working together, in coordination with the specialized agencies of the United Nations, to promote good will through innovative programmes. For example, we could formulate educational projects for our children and youth to promote better understanding of cultural differences and to encourage tolerance and coexistence. The projects agreed upon could then be developed and implemented by the United Nations Children's Fund and other agencies, with the cooperation of the countries involved. This might be a useful contribution towards creating an atmosphere of tolerance and mutual respect among all the peoples of our region.

The other key to a better future is democratization. Democracy is essential to the preservation of the individual's rights and fundamental freedoms. It is a historical fact that democracies do not go to war against other democracies. Therefore, democratization is also directly tied to creating an environment of stability, security and peace.

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Peace and democracy: these are the two ingredients which the Middle East needs most desperately. With them, our region can flower and prosper. Without them, we face a bleak and gloomy future.

I feel obliged to share our deep concern following the extensive racist and anti-Semitic outbursts in many places. It is our moral obligation to raise our voice and to call upon every enlightened individual, society and Government to condemn and fight these immoral phenomena. It is our duty and our mission to condemn this threat without hesitation, and to put an end to it.

I would also like to stress that the plight of oppressed Jewish communities in some of the countries in our region is close to our hearts. We shall spare no effort to ensure their right to reunite with the rest of the Jewish people. We shall not rest until they are free. Our thoughts and prayers are with them at all times.

As of now, six Israeli soldiers are still missing in action: Ron Arad, Yehuda Katz, Zachary Baumel, Zvi Feldman, Joseph Fink and Rachamim Alsheikh. We would like to thank the Secretary-General for his efforts to secure their return. We call upon those countries and organizations holding them to abide by international law and to display humanitarian sensitivity in order to prevent further suffering by the soldiers and their families and friends. Let our sons come home.

Many of us from all sides of the borders, and from all peoples - Israelis, Arabs, Jews, Druze and others - have lost friends and relatives on the long and painful path of conflict. The time has come for all of us to learn the lesson. The time has come to build a better future for us and for coming generations. The time has come for peace.

Mr. MAKKAWI (Lebanon): Since this is the first time I have addressed you, Sir, in your capacity as President of the General Assembly, I should like to congratulate you on your assumption of that post and on the brilliant manner in which you have conducted our work.

On behalf of my delegation I should also like to thank the Secretary-General for his reports on the situation in the Middle East, documents A/47/716, A/47/672 and A/47/673, and for the views expressed therein. I take this occasion to commend him for his report, "An Agenda for Peace: Preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peace-keeping" (A/47/277), which has been the single most effective force in guiding the work of the Organization at its forty-seventh session.

More than a year has passed since the International Peace Conference on the Middle East was held at Madrid. That historic initiative was based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1972) and on the clear constructs of the land-for-peace formula. Lebanon's participation was in response to the letter of invitation from the two sponsors of the Conference and the letter of assurances from the United States Government specifying the need for the full implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978). Since thus far no Security Council resolutions pertaining to the Arab-Israeli conflict or the Israeli occupation of Lebanese territory have been implemented, Lebanon has committed itself to the peace process wholeheartedly. Subsequently, we have carried our dialogue with Israel on to Washington and will begin the eighth round of bilateral negotiations in a few days. It is our understanding that the fruit of our endeavours will lead to full respect for Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

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However, it is incumbent upon me to mention that while the world entertains the possibility of peace on the horizon in the Middle East, the people of southern Lebanon, East Jerusalem, the West Bank, Gaza and the Golan experience none other than the same scenario of illegal occupation, domination, subjugation and human rights violations as they did before. Despite all of the pomp and circumstance of the peace talks, the situation in the occupied territories remains utterly dismal as a result of Israel's failure to honour its obligations arising from numerous Security Council resolutions, the United Nations Charter and other rules and instruments of international law, including the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949.

In other words, while my delegation is pleased that the Arabs and the Israelis have set a historic precedent with this peace initiative, it is my sad duty to report that so far these talks have achieved nothing substantive - and here I am referring to a meaningful transfer of authority from Israel to the Arabs of all of the illegally annexed or occupied Arab territories. This is the bottom line if we wish to obtain a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

However, as we have approached the table looking to exchange land for genuine peace, as Egypt did 14 years ago, we have been met with intransigence and public-relations smokescreens put up by the Israelis. Even Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, speaking before the forty-seventh session of the United Nations General Assembly, told the world that:

"The end of conflict is no longer a Utopian fantasy" (A/47/PV.20, p. 44) and that the Jewish people

"pray that the year to come will bring peace, freedom and prosperity to build a new Middle East." (Ibid., p. 57)

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Yet in spite of those eloquent words, which sound magnanimous in the form of 10-second sound-bytes, we have seen nothing done to implement them since the start of the negotiations.

Instead, in the face of promises of confidence-building measures, the most exigent of which is the freeze on settlements in the occupied territories, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has publicly committed himself to building more than 10,000 new housing units to house some 65,000 Israelis in areas concentrated in and around East Jerusalem and the Golan. Meanwhile, we heard last month the Chairman of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories report that settlement activity in the occupied territories is in fact three times higher than the rate announced by the Israeli authorities.

Furthermore, there has been no improvement in the conditions of the Arabs living under former Defense Minister Rabin's infamous iron-fist policy. Testimony to this is found in the adoption last month by the Special Political Committee of the General Assembly of several resolutions condemning Israel for its systematic campaign of repression against the Arabs under its occupation.

Taken as a group, those resolutions cite Israel for numerous human-rights violations including harsh and brutal punitive measures, arbitrary detention, imprisonment and deportation of Arabs, the destruction or closing of universities, schools and educational and vocational institutions and the imposition of Israeli laws, jurisdiction and administration on the occupied territories. They condemn Israel's grave breaches of the fourth Geneva Convention and its repeated raids on the premises and installations of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Middle East. Further, the resolutions stress the need for broader United Nations

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access to the occupied territories and reaffirm that the acquisition of territory by force is inadmissible under the United Nations Charter and that all territories thus occupied by Israel must be returned. They urge the Security Council to secure United Nations protection for the defenseless Palestinian people until Israeli withdrawal is achieved.

In the case of my country I am pleased to report that Lebanon has formed a new Government under a new Prime Minister, His Excellency Mr. Rafic Hariri. Its formation is welcomed by the Arab world and the international community as an auspicious development, since the Government's agenda is fully committed to the implementation of the Taif Agreement, to broadening and strengthening national reconciliation and to the process of reconstruction and development.

However, as Lebanon embarks on the path of national reconciliation, reconstruction and stability it is faced with a discrepancy between Israel's conciliatory words, on the one hand, and its destructive behaviour, on the other. I refer again to the speech of Foreign Minister Peres before the forty-seventh session of the United Nations General Assembly, in which he uttered the initially smooth but inherently contradictory statement that:

> "The moment Lebanon finds peace within itself and independence from outside intervention, Lebanon and Israel will live in peace again." (A/47/PV.20, p. 51)

Meanwhile, and most significantly, Israel refuses to withdraw in spite of clear-cut Security Council resolutions mandating that it do so, in particular resolutions 425 (1978) and 426 (1978), the first of which created the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) for the purpose of

> "confirming the withdrawal of the Israeli forces, restoring international peace and security and assisting the Government of Lebanon in ensuring the return of its effective authority in the area."

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Today however, some 14 years later, these and other relevant United Nations resolutions remain unimplemented. In addition, Israel refuses to abide by the provisions of the Armistice Agreement which it signed with Lebanon in 1949 under the auspices of the Security Council, and whose validity the Council has reaffirmed on many occasions.

Another glaring example of Israel's true intentions to perpetuate its occupation of Lebanese territory and to destabilize the nation as a whole is found in its indiscriminate attacks on Lebanon. Thus far this year, Israel has subjected my country to bombardment by land, air and sea some 50 times, a figure that is double the number of attacks made by Israel in 1990 or 1991 and more than their sum combined. How ironic it is, then, that this is the historic era of negotiations for peace. Even the Madrid Peace Conference was off to an ominous start, when shells came raining down on Lebanon as Lebanese and Israeli delegations sat face to face at the table.

These are attacks that show no sign of ending so long as Israel continues to perpetuate its wholly illegal occupation of sovereign Lebanese soil. That Member State must understand that, as far as the south of Lebanon is concerned, instability and violence will continue just as long as the occupation itself remains. The root of the conflict between Israel and Lebanon is the Israeli occupation, and it has been proved that Israel cannot possibly maintain its security by flagrantly breaching the sovereignty of another nation. The occupation of part of Lebanon has brought neither peace nor security to Israel, but on the contrary is a major source of instability for all concerned.

Israel must realize that a comprehensive peace cannot be achieved separately. For years now, my delegation and many others have been adamant in our conviction that the non-resolution of the Palestinian problem is the core

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of the region's problems; and while we categorically reject any attempt to settle Palestinians on Lebanese soil, we are committed to the realization of the legitimate national aspirations of the Palestinian people. Simply put, no lesser end than Palestinian self-determination and the restoration of full Lebanese and Syrian sovereignty on their national soil can bring an end to the endless cycle of war and bloodshed that our generation and generations before us have lived through. No lesser end can guarantee the dignity, protection and inalienable human rights of all people of the region.

At the same time, we know that only one State in the region is in the position to implement Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978); and we know that the ball is squarely in that State's court. But Israel continues to stall the peace process and to create obstacles. Its refusal to allow the United Nations to participate in bilateral talks is a glaring example of its strategy to minimize the sanctity of United Nations resolutions and to legitimize its annexations and occupations. So long as it continues to claim that Arab territories constitute a part of the State of Israel, subject to Israeli laws, jurisdiction and administration, there cannot and will not be peace.

As this Assembly conducts its annual debate on the item of the situation in the Middle East, it is aware that the Arab-Israeli conflict is an anachronism that exists in spite of the end of the cold war, in spite of scores of Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, including 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 125 (1978), in spite of the peace process, and in spite of the pledge of this Organization to rise to the lofty visions of its founding fathers. It exists as an agonizing thorn in the side of this global body, while the thrust and vision of the Secretary-General's report "An Agenda

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for Peace" consist of assurances that the United Nations has redefined and strengthened its role as peacemaker and as the guarantor of international security.

Lebanon, like the rest of the world, will be following with keen interest the eighth round of bilateral negotiations in Washington to see if there is any substantive change in the Israeli position. While we welcome United Nations participation in the multilateral talks, we seek a broader and more fitting role for the Organization in the Middle East peace process, including participation in bilateral negotiations. The time has come for Israel to respect international norms, principles and resolutions. Should that State continue to be inflexible and unwilling to make a sincere commitment to the peace process, then the United Nations recourse is immediately to convene an International Peace Conference on the Middle East under its own auspices in order to achieve a comprehensive peace based on all relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly.

Miss AL-HAMAMI (Yemen) (interpretation from Arabic): The region of the Middle East, the fountainhead of monotheistic religions, the crossroads of civilizations and the focus of mankind's unending activity, has continued to suffer, for a long time, from tensions, conflicts and disputes which have tended to deteriorate into devastating wars. While the peoples of the region inure themselves to live through the upheavals of the region, they do so because they have no alternative. They know full well, as do the other members of the international community, that the tensions of the region stem from the foreign designs of foreign interests that covet the region because of its energy resources. Herein, we face a very unfair paradox: the blessing bestowed by God on the region and its people, the boon which could have been a

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source of stability and prosperity, has been unjustly turned by others into a curse which threatens not only the peoples of the region but also the peace and security of the world.

As soon as the dark shadow of a nuclear holocaust was lifted with the ending of the cold war, the world witnessed the emergence of a tendency towards the maintenance of peace and the elimination of the dangers that threaten the environment, side by side with an increasing awareness of the relationship between development and the environment. There has also emerged a tendency towards solving disputes by peaceful means, more movement towards democracy and multilateralism, the upholding of human rights and the guaranteeing of fundamental freedoms as a basis for political systems. The international community should seize this auspicious moment with both hands and demonstrate the sincere political will to find comprehensive, just and durable solutions to the challenges facing our contemporary world. Short of this, the international community will lack the credibility that would validate its determination to establish a new world order in consonance with the aspirations of mankind after freedom, democracy and wider prosperity.

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Proceeding from this, we believe that the proper way to deal with the issues pertaining to the situation in the Middle East, is to adopt an approach that takes into account the following facts:

First, the question of Palestine is the core issue of the Arab-Israeli dispute. No solution to this dispute could be reached unless the Palestinian people regains its legitimate national rights, especially the right to self-determination. This cannot be achieved without full Israeli withdrawal from the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, including Al-Quds and from the other occupied Arab territories.

Secondly, an international conference for peace in the Middle East should be convened under the aegis of the United Nations with the participation, on an equal footing of all parties to the dispute, including the Palestine Liberation Organization and the permanent members of the Security Council. The conference should be convened on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

Thirdly, Israel's aggressive policies, its brutal excesses against the Palestinian people must be curbed and an end put to the expropriation of land, the establishment of settlements together with the other terroristic, aggressive and oppressive measures and acts which breach the United Nations Charter, the principles of international law and all relevant international agreements and conventions. Israel must rescind its decision to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration on the occupied Syrian Arab Golan Heights as called for by Security Council resolution 497 (1981). It must be made to comply with Security Council resolutions 523 (1982), 508 (1982), 509 (1982), 659 (1990) and other relevant Security Council resolutions. Israel must end its occupation of Southern Lebanon and desist from its attempts

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to change its demographic character in naked defiance of the will of the international community.

Fourthly, the success of the Peace Conference on the Middle East under the co-sponsorship of the United States and the Russian Federation is something we support. However, the ongoing negotiations cannot succeed so long as they do not take their point of departure from commitment to the principle of land for peace in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and as long as Israel does not accept to fully withdraw from all the occupied territories and to completely renounce the policy of expansion and settlement, particularly in the sacred city of Al-Quds and as long as it does not desist from building settlements under any political or security pretext. Israel must also recognize the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, to sovereignty and to independence.

Fifthly, the Middle East region must be declared a zone free from all nuclear, chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction. All States in the region, must accede to the non-proliferation regime, without exception.

The peace and security after which the peoples of the region aspire cannot be achieved by Israel's diktat. Israel has always slammed the door in the face of peace. No door has been left open. All attempts to achieve a comprehensive and just peace are faced with Israeli conditions which are like putting the cart before the horse.

Israel's understanding of peace is surrender. That is no longer acceptable to the contemporary international community. Israel must abandon its aggressive approach and oppressive measures against the unarmed Palestinian people and the other peoples of the occupied Arab territories. It

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must stop flouting the resolutions of international legality. To go on doing that is to breach the Charter, the principles of international law and to threaten international peace and security.

Mr. ALLAGANY (Saudi Arabia) (interpretation from Arabic): The Middle East is at the forefront of the regions which occupy the attention of the international community and take up a large share of international efforts.

A quick survey of the situation in the Middle East, shows that it still threatens not only the security and stability of the region, but also international peace and security. Israel occupied large tracts of Arab land during the 1967 war, most of which are still under its control 25 years later. Until now, peace has not been achieved in the region and the Palestinians are not one step closer to regaining their national rights, including their right to self-determination.

Since then, Israel has continued to defy the international community by planning and executing policies that aim at usurping those occupied lands, while continuing at the same time to dispossess the Palestinians of more of their land. Israel has worked hard indeed at diminishing the numbers of the Palestinians in the occupied territories with a view to transforming those territories into a colony. Israel has persisted in trying to achieve its original objective which is to tighten its grip on the Arab territories it occupied in 1967 and to suppress any Arab attempt at resistance in those territories.

In Article 47, the Fourth Geneva Convention prohibits, the annexation of lands occupied by military force. The United Nations adopted resolutions condemning these Israeli policies in East Jerusalem and other Arab towns and cities. Article 49 of the same Convention prohibits the transfer or expulsion

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of the indigenous populace from the occupied territory under any pretext. Yet, we still see the Palestinians being expelled from their lands.

The same Article prohibits the occupying Power from transferring any part of its civilian population into the territory it occupies. Yet, Israel continues to increase the number of settlements which the reports before us say constitute more than 60 per cent of the West Bank and Gaza that were expropriated by military orders from 1967 to 1992. Two hundred and thirty thousand Israelis have been settled in 212 settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, including the Holy City of Al-Quds. The same situation pertains in the Syrian Arab Golan where the occupying authorities have persisted in trying to change the demographic character by increasing the number of settlements.

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According to published Israeli estimates, Israel will receive more than 100,000 new settlers by the end of this year, and the number of new settlers in the Golan will reach two million during the next five years. Former Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir alluded to this plan when he said, "large-scale immigration will require a greater Israel." At present, there are only five Arab villages out of the original 110 which were in existence before the occupation. Forty five Israeli settlements have been built on the ruins of Syrian Arab villages in the Golan. Israel has expelled 93 per cent of the Golan population in order for it to give substance, in the Arab Syrian lands, to the false aphorism: "a land without a people, for a people without a land."

Israel continues to execute its plans to change the historical, cultural, social and economic characteristics of the occupied territories on which it imposes its administration, its laws and its identity in order to erase the Arab identity of the occupied Golan, in contradiction to Security Council resolution 497 (1981) and other relevant United Nations resolutions.

The nature of Israel's policies has become clear for the international community starting with the principle of invasion for the purpose of occupation, through the principle of plundering natural resources and imposing collective economic punishment. In so doing Israel resorts to measures of brute force, such as the demolition of houses, the uprooting of trees, and other equally oppressive measures, which aim at the gradual annexation of the occupied Arab territories.

Not content with the lands occupied in 1967, Israel invaded yet another Arab country, Lebanon, of which it still occupies the southern part. From time to time, it bombs and shells the villages and towns in Southern Lebanon and the Western Bekaa Valley, which results in many casualties and great

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material loss. Israel's continued deplorable aggression against Lebanon aims at pre-empting the implementation of United Nations resolutions, particularly Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which requires Israel to withdraw from Southern Lebanon. In this regard, we have to reiterate our call for Israel to commit itself to the complete and unconditional implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978), in order for the Lebanese Government to be able to exercise its legitimate authority over all the Lebanese soil. I have to stress here that the Lebanese Government has made great progress in its efforts to implement the Taif Agreement by taking all the necessary political and constitutional measures. The international community must continue to support these Lebanese efforts and participate in the reconstruction of Lebanon. In this connection, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia appeals to the international community to work towards the establishment of an international fund for the reconstruction of Lebanon.

The time has come for the Middle East region to receive its share of security, peace and tranquillity so that all the energies of its people may be directed towards stability and development. The Arab countries have demonstrated their sincere desire to establish a permanent and just peace in the Middle East. They have demonstrated that desire by participating in the peace negotiations co-sponsored by the United States and the Russian Federation. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has extended its full support to the peace process in the Middle East. It believes that peace requires the elimination of the dangers of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. It is imperative that we convince all countries in the region, without exception, to desist from producing, stockpiling or acquiring any such weapons. In fact, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and all other Arab States, have implemented by word and deed the nuclear non-proliferation Treaty. It is

(Mr. Allagany, Saudi Arabia)

now imperative that all countries in the region, including Israel, become parties to this Treaty in order to achieve a balance that guarantees security, peace and stability for all.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia believes in finding a just solution to the situation in the Middle East. It also believes that no real peace will be achieved in the Middle East unless a permanent and just solution to the Palestinian issue is found, and unless there is complete withdrawal by Israel from all the Arab territories occupied since the 1967 war, foremost among which is the Holy City of Al-Quds, which is an integral part of the occupied territories, as well as withdrawal by Israel from Southern Lebanon. The success of the current peace process in the Middle East clearly depends on Israel's serious implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and all other relevant United Nations resolutions.

The time has come for this region to receive its share of security, peace and stability, and for all its resources to be channelled to the achievement of prosperity for its peoples. The Middle East region can provide a decent standard of living for all who live there and can become an oasis of progress and ingenuity, thus returning to what it once was, a fount of human civilization.

Mr. ABDUL GHAFFAR (Bahrain) (interpretation from Arabic): With the Madrid Peace Conference, the Middle East entered upon a new stage which is a historic turning-point that marks the end of one era and the beginning of another whose features are not clearly defined yet.

Undoubtedly, periods of historic transformation are usually fraught with the residues and suspicions of the past and clouded by fears and anxieties regarding the future.

The Middle East region now lives through a period of searching for peace after four decades of conflict and war, which undermined the stability of the region and uprooted yet more Palestinians from their homeland. The region today needs to reaffirm and strengthen two interconnected underpinnings of a true climate of peace, namely the following: renewal of the international community's resolve to urge Israel to implement Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and other relevant resolutions; and confidence-building between the parties to the conflict, especially by calling on Israel to declare that it is putting an end to its Zionist project of expansion, settlement and military and nuclear superiority.

Although it is rather difficult to predict the course of the thorny peace negotiations between the parties to the Middle East conflict or to weigh their prospects either optimistically or pessimistically, there do not seem to be any positive signs on the horizon that Israel is willing to accept or abide by the behests of international legality embodied in United Nations resolutions and particularly in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which reaffirm the principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of the territory of others by force.

(Mr. Abdul Ghaffar, Bahrain)

After seven rounds of difficult and tiring negotiations between the Arab and Israeli parties, it has become clear that the Israeli negotiator's aim is to achieve two objectives: first, to push the Palestinian question, the very essence of the Arab-Israeli conflict, into a secondary line of the negotiations; and secondly, to reject the international interpretation of resolution 242 (1967) and impose an Israeli interpretation, and hence to put an end to the principle of land for peace, on the basis of which the negotiations started.

Undoubtedly, this wrong interpretation of resolution 242 (1967) and of other relevant United Nations resolutions cannot help create a positive prospect of coexistence between the peoples of the region, for it is a unidimensional very narrow interpretation.

Although the peace talks still continue between the Arabs and Israel, it is regrettable to see that the Israeli occupation authorities still adopt a business-as-usual attitude with regard to their habitual practices and their settlement policy in the occupied Arab territories, as they have been doing since 1967, regardless of the fact that this breaches the provisions of international instruments such as the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of August 1949, and runs counter to the relevant United Nations General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, including resolution 446 (1979), adopted in March 1979, in which the Security Council determined that such policies have no legal validity and constitute a serious obstruction to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East; and resolution 476 (1980), adopted by the Security Council to put a stop to the legislation initiated by the Israeli Parliament declaring Al-Quds as the eternal capital of Israel. Moreover,

(Mr. Abdul Ghaffar, Bahrain)

there is also resolution 478 (1980), in which the Security Council reaffirmed once again that all legislative and administrative measures taken by Israel which have altered or purport to alter the character and status of the Holy City of Al-Quds are null and void, particularly the "basic law on Jerusalem".

The Memorandum addressed to the Secretary-General on 19 November by the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic affirms that Israel continues to build settlements and to pursue its arbitrary practices against the people in the occupied Arab territories, even though Security Council resolution 497 (1981) does consider that the Israeli decision to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights as null and void and without international legal effect.

As for Lebanon, an end should be put to Israel's attempts to link withdrawal from the occupied Lebanese territories with the settlement of the Middle East problem. This can be done only through the implementation of resolution 425 (1978), which calls for the unconditional withdrawal of Israel from the occupied Lebanese territories in order to enable the Lebanese Government to practice its effective and full authority over the Lebanese territories. The members of the Security Council, in the presidential statement contained in document S/23610, after their 19 February 1992 meeting, reaffirmed their commitment to the full sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Lebanon within its internationally recognized boundaries, as set out in resolution 425 (1978).

The problem of the negotiations between the parties to the Israel-Arab conflict requires a very profound awareness of the need to arrive at concrete results. The accumulations of the past are full of very painful incidents,

(Mr. Abdul Ghaffar, Bahrain)

particularly for the Palestinian people, who have been expelled from their homeland and have lived as refugees in the countries of the diaspora. This reality should impel the international community and the two co-sponsors of the Peace Conference, the United States of America and the Russian Federation, to continue contributing concepts and ideas within the context of international legality in order to reach a rational comprehensive and just settlement to the Middle East problem.

In conclusion, Bahrain wishes to underscore the importance of implementing Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and other relevant United Nations resolutions. Failing that, peace will not be possible, and we will not be able to spare the Middle East region the outbreak of new wars.

Mr. AWAD (Syrian Arab Republic) (interpretation from Arabic): The United Nations has been seized of the situation in the Middle East since 1947, and in every annual session since 1970, the General Assembly has debated the item relating to the situation in the Middle East. The Assembly has repeatedly reaffirmed that peace in the Middle East is an indivisible whole and that it must be based on a just and comprehensive solution to this problem, under the aegis of the United Nations and on the basis of its relevant resolutions and that the solution must guarantee the complete and unconditional withdrawal by Israel from the Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Al-Quds and the Golan, and enable the Palestinian people to exercise its right to self-determination, independence and the establishment of its independent State, in accordance with United Nations resolutions relating to the question of Palestine.

Furthermore, one Secretary-General after another has continued to furnish the General Assembly with annual reports on the situation in the Middle East, in a vain search for any positive development in the region.

Unfortunately, this all-embracing international effort to find a just and peaceful settlement to the Arab-Israeli dispute has repeatedly come up against the obstacle of Israel's continuing rejection of such settlement. It is now clear, more than ever before, that settlement of the dispute is something that clashes with Israel's concept of peace and with the declared policies of Israel's leaders, which aim at imposing a partial peace that would not involve the return of all the occupied Arab and Palestinian territories and would not allow the Palestinian people to exercise its legitimate rights.

(Mr. Awad, Syrian Arab Republic)

It has become abundantly clear that Israel, while accepting the Madrid Peace Conference, remains unable to realize that this international Conference, in which the United Nations, the European Community and many other parties participate, was accepted by the Arab parties and the international community, including the Conference's two co-sponsors, because it was held on the basis of implementing Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), which stipulate the inadmissibility of the acquisition of land by force, call on Israel to unconditionally withdraw from the occupied Arab territories, and provide for the establishment of a just and comprehensive peace in the region.

It appears that Israel's reading of international changes is, as usual, a perverse reading. For while all the other States, without exception, stress the need to take advantage of the positive developments following the ending of the cold war, to use such positive developments to develop positive relations between peoples and States and to achieve the desired world peace, Israel's leaders alone, come up with a unique analysis and assessment of the changes that have taken place and continue to take place, in the international arena, in the fond belief that those profound international changes favour their blinkered view that leads them to hope to be able to exploit the period of transition from the old to the new world order in promoting and entrenching their intransigent expansionist approach, imposing their fait accompli policy on the Arabs and, thereby, undermining the peace process.

This peace process, which has been going on for more than a year, during which the Arab delegations have taken part in seven rounds of negotiations with the Israeli delegation has not led to any concrete, substantive progress, because the Israeli Government's intransigently persists in its

(Mr. Awad, Syrian Arab Republic)

blackmail postures and unrealistic interpretations of the immutable facts of geography, history and security.

A just and comprehensive solution in consonance with international legality would be the ideal solution to the Arab-Israeli dispute. Peace cannot be established at the expense of the lands and rights of others, or upon the trampling of international law. Furthermore, there is no legal, ethical, humanitarian or political justification for the Arabs to present Israel with their occupied territories and their legitimate rights in order for Israel to be agreeable to peace.

Yes, indeed, we are of those who believe that the solution must guarantee the security of all parties, but we do not subscribe to the views that it is Israel's security alone that should be guaranteed. Israel's dictum of security for Israel alone and its perpetuation of its occupation of the occupied Arab territories highlight the fact that Israel cannot visualize or understand the concept of a just and comprehensive peace. It is indeed a strange paradox that, to date, Israel has not stated that it agrees in an integrated manner to the American initiative. The Israeli negotiators continue to put on the table, with the aim of equivocating, misleading and obsolete readings of resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), and also of the principle of land for peace.

Perhaps it is now legitimate to wonder whether there is any difference between the policies of the Right and the policies of the Left in Israel vis-à-vis the ongoing peace process. The claim that under the Rabin Government, as compared to the Shamir Government, there has been a change of policies and a change in priorities seems to lack so far the credibility that comes from concrete actions.

(Mr. Awad, Syrian Arab Republic)

It is high time Israel gave up the illusion that it uses to deceive its people and others with its declamations about a desire for peace with its Arab neighbours. Peace talks have never been a theatrical end in itself. Peace cannot be achieved through the clever manipulation of the mass media. Peace will be achieved only through a complete Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories and recognition of the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people. Any manoeuvre to dilute these two principles is doomed to failure. Such manoeuvres can only jeopardize the peace process and mislead international public opinion.

Therefore, Israel must put an end to its unending provocative manoeuvring in the peace process and vis-à-vis international legality. These provocations have reached such an extent that it is no longer possible to ignore them, whether in relation to southern Lebanon, the occupied Syrian Golan or the occupied Palestinian territories, where the acts of repression against the heroic intifadah of the Palestinian people cause daily grief.

Israel, by its aggressive practices, has provided the world with clear evidence that it does not care to build peace and that it does not heed international public opinion or international legality. We all remember how last year, at the apex of the peace process, the Israeli Knesset adopted a resolution declaring the occupied Syrian Golan to be Israeli land that could not be conceded, thus totally ignoring international public opinion, as well as the resolutions of this international Organization - the very Organization which, a few decades ago, brought Israel into existence and which condemned the annexation of the Golan and declared it to be null and void and without any legal effect.

(Mr. Awad, Syrian Arab Republic)

We have stated in Madrid that we are determined to go on working and cooperating for the achievement of a just and comprehensive peace based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), and on the principle of returning the occupied territories in exchange for peace. During the negotiations in Washington, we clearly demonstrated our goodwill and serious desire to achieve a just peace and to ensure the success of the peace process. However, no one must forget that this determination of ours is matched only by our determination to reject any attempt to exploit the peace process or to dilute it with the objective of legitimizing what is illegitimate and unacceptable in our eyes and in the eyes of the United Nations, its Charter and resolutions.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic has declared that we want a complete peace in return for complete withdrawal from all the occupied Arab territories. However, this challenge, which my country issued to Israel from this very rostrum, has remained unanswered to this date.

Mr. OSVALD (Sweden): Sweden warmly welcomes the fact that Middle East peace negotiations based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) are still going on - and with increasing intensity.

The process must continue and the parties must refrain from any action that could put obstacles in its way. It is of fundamental importance that the parties keep on talking to each other and keep on trying to find viable ways and means of making progress, while focusing on the opportunities for peace rather than on the price of peace.

Nobody expects a situation of conflict, entrenched over so many years, to be solved swiftly and smoothly. There may be a special need to underline the positive aspects of peaceful coexistence, in short to enhance the awareness

(Mr. Osvald, Sweden)

that peace is not a zero-sum game, but something from which everyone stands to gain.

The fact that seven rounds of bilateral talks have now been carried out within the framework of the ongoing peace process is, in itself, a source of encouragement. Concrete proposals have now been submitted for further discussion. It is only through further efforts and compromise on the part of the parties directly involved that the peace process can be taken forward. In this context, we would like to express our appreciation of the untiring catalytic work carried out by the co-sponsors.

In a region permeated by mistrust, extraregional efforts may have a positive role to play. Forums for these efforts are provided by the multilateral working groups, dealing with five areas of particular importance for peaceful coexistence. Sweden has participated in all the meetings of the working groups. While aware that the multilateral groups remain an irreplaceable complement to a bilateral process, we stand ready to contribute to the work as it becomes more concrete. We are fully conscious of the fact that peace cannot be imposed: it has to be built on the genuine wish of the parties involved.

It remains our conviction, however, that no settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict will be possible unless Israel is willing to negotiate withdrawal of its forces from the occupied territories. It is equally necessary that Israel's right to exist within secure and recognized boundaries be accepted by the States in the region.

It is Sweden's view that the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people, including the right to form a State, must be an integral component of any sustainable solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. One

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aspect of the right to self-determination is the right to appoint one's own representatives. In this context, Sweden welcomes the fact that the Israeli Government has recently proposed steps that would allow contacts between Israeli citizens and representatives of the PLO.

Respect for human rights is a cornerstone of the overall Swedish foreign policy. No country should escape scrutiny in this regard. We recognize the fact that Israel provides a democratic example in hostile surroundings. Owing perhaps in part to the high expectations attached to Israel as a democracy, disappointment over its infractions of human rights in the occupied territories becomes all the more acute. In our view, the Fourth Geneva Convention applies to, and must be respected in, the occupied territories.

In this context, the Swedish Government welcomes the freeze on new settlements declared by the Israeli Government and hopes that it will become fully implemented, in all areas and on a permanent basis. Sweden commends the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East for its important work in support of the Palestine refugees.

When it comes to the human rights situation in other parts of the region, we must express our concern, not only over the lack of respect for human rights, but also over the lack of democracy, which continues to characterize many countries. We are, however, encouraged by the efforts in certain countries in the region to promote democratic development.

Confidence-building measures are needed from all sides, and contact is better than isolation when the task is to overcome entrenched distrust. We urge Israel to continue to take measures to improve life in the occupied territories. It is also our view that the Arab countries should now decide to lift their boycott against Israel.

(Mr. Osvald, Sweden)

Sweden attaches great importance to the role of the United Nations in the Middle East. United Nations involvement in the conflict over the decades entails responsibility.

We welcome the fact that the United Nations is now a full extraregional participant in some of the multilateral working groups. The possible United Nations contribution to the work of these groups, and its possible contribution in the event of the conclusion of peace agreements, should not be underestimated. As in the past, Sweden would consider participation in such peace-keeping operations as may be part of the process for implementing the results of the ongoing talks.

At this crucial juncture, it is important that the resolutions of the General Assembly on the Middle East reflect and respect the present developments in the region. The task of the international community in the current phase, as we see it, is to do its utmost to promote the peace process.

Mr. GAMBARI (Nigeria): The agenda item "The situation in the Middle East", together with its core problem, the question of Palestine, has remained one of the most intractable international problems on the agenda of the United Nations. The General Assembly has dealt with it since 1948, and efforts to find a political solution to the problems have failed to provide a comprehensive solution to the Middle East crisis. My delegation is, however, happy to note that the positive new trends that have emerged in the international environment as a result of the end of the cold war brighten the prospects for a settlement of the problems of the Middle East. We must endeavour, therefore, to seize these new opportunities to find a just and lasting solution to the Middle East problem. We note and warmly welcome the negotiations that were launched at the Madrid Peace Conference in October 1991. They represent the beginning of a new era of consultation, reconciliation and cooperation that should lead to an enduring peace in the region. Over the years, the General Assembly has adopted several resolutions and decisions with a view to providing a basis for a political solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The problems of the Middle East are multifaceted. They have political, military, legal and humanitarian aspects. We are therefore encouraged by the present peace efforts, especially the invitation to the United Nations to attend, as a full participant, the multilateral working groups on regional issues and the appointment by the Secretary-General of a Special Representative to the multilateral talks. The Special Representative is charged with coordinating the role of the United Nations in the working groups on arms control and regional security, water, environment, economic and

(Mr. Gambari, Nigeria)

regional development and the matter of refugees. We urge the international community to lend its full support to the opportunities now present for moving the Arab-Israeli conflict to the stage of resolution and thus rekindle the long-standing hopes for peace and stability in the Middle East. Nigeria firmly believes that the role of the United Nations in the peace process in the Middle East is particularly crucial.

There is no doubt that the question of Palestine is the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The denial to the Palestinians of their right to self-determination and a homeland cannot be allowed to continue without further endangering international peace and security. The issue of self-determination is not separate from that of respect for human rights, which has today assumed a greater dimension and importance on the international agenda. My delegation believes that no castle of peace can be built in the Middle East unless a homeland for the Palestinians is part of the structural engineering.

We continue to be concerned at the cynical application of a different scale of values on the plight of the Palestinians. It is necessary to stress that Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) provide a fair and just basis for the resolution of the Middle East conflict. We therefore urge Israel to agree to give up the occupied territories in exchange for peace and prosperity in the region. After all, the parties to the conflict have a shared interest in ensuring peace, stability, security and prosperity in the region. We hope that a fair and reasonable settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict will start with the return of occupied territories, the acceptance of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian peoples to a homeland, and the development of harmonious co-existence between the Arabs and the Israelis.

(Mr. Gambari, Nigeria)

My delegation views with serious concern the situation in the occupied territories and the problem of the Palestinian refugees who have endured the harsh measures and collective punishments - such as deportations, large-scale arrests, detentions, raids of homes and villages, prolonged curfews and destruction of trees and crops - that the occupying authorities have continued to perpetrate against the Palestinian people. These actions are in clear violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and in violation of international humanitarian law. We are particularly concerned that women and children constitute a considerable number of the victims of these harsh measures.

The international community has a duty to protect the civilian population in the occupied territories. Failure to solve this problem will not only continue to inflict tremendous suffering on the Palestinian people, but also pose a threat to peace in the Middle East. Nigeria firmly believes in the value of a negotiated settlement. This is why, together with other countries, we have been persistent in the call for an international peace conference on the question of the Middle East, under the auspices of the United Nations, with all parties concerned participating on an equal footing.

My delegation believes that the need to secure a peaceful settlement of the conflict has never been stronger than it is now. The Middle East has been subjected to five major wars in recent times, and the serious risk of further armed confrontation would have dire repercussions for peace and security and for the economic development of the region. It is therefore important that the international community in general and the parties to the conflict in particular demonstrate the necessary political will to resolve the conflict. In this regard, we urge all Member States to lend their support to ensure the success of the multilateral talks now in progress.

Mr. ABU ODEH (Jordan) (interpretation from Arabic): About two weeks ago, 25 years had passed since the Security Council adopted its celebrated resolution, 242 (1967). If that means anything, it is simply that the Arab-Israeli conflict remains unsettled. That conflict, with its core issue, the Palestinian question, still figures on the United Nations General Assembly agenda as an item entitled "The situation in the Middle East", the very same situation which was supposed to reach a peaceful settlement through the adoption of resolution 242 (1967).

We would have hoped that that resolution was not destined to celebrate its silver jubilee. The fact that it has, very sadly and regrettably, means that it has not been implemented and that the Palestinian territories and the Syrian Golan Heights remain under occupation. It also means that the Palestinian people under occupation still has to pay the price of non-implementation of that resolution 242 (1967) in blood, detention, suffering, uncertainty, displacement and in falling behind economically, socially and culturally in an environment that lacks the peaceful requisites of progress. It also means that the Palestinian people continues to be deprived of its inalienable political rights, especially the right to self-determination and sovereignty over its national soil.

(Mr. Abu Odeh, Jordan)

Why should that people continue to be deprived of its right to self-determination, almost half a century after the decolonization era, regardless of the fact that it is a people that has lived continuously and uninterruptedly for long centuries in its own homeland? The Palestinans are rooted in their land like the olive tree they still tend and cherish just as their ancestors did from the Byzantine era and through the various Islamic epochs, the rule of the Crusaders in the Middle Ages and under the British mandate between the two World Wars. As a people, they have continuously rejected and resisted the Israeli occupation. They are a full-fledged people with all the sectors of any viable functioning society: the financiers, businessmen, executives, workers, peasants, merchants, artists, writers, academics, scientists, professionals, technicians and artisans in all walks of life. They are an established people that has its own distinctive culture and folklore, its own national leadership that spearheads its legitimate struggle and whose representative has occupied an Observer seat in the General Assembly of this Organization for the past 18 years. Why should such a people continue to be deprived of its right to self-determination? Could it perhaps be that it is because Israel, and not some other State, is the occupier? Maybe!

There are Arabs and Palestinians who are convinced that it is so. There are others, however, who do not want to believe it is so, because they do not want to lose hope. Those who hold on to this view do so from the standpoint of belief in the United Nations and commitment to its Charter and the belief that such a dangerous problem is bound to be dealt with responsibly. They also cling to this view because of their love for peace, their deep awareness of the evils of war and their belief in the fundamental need for security and

(Mr. Abu Odeh, Jordan)

stability, without which no State can preserve its resources or channel its capabilities to the development that would guarantee progress and prosperity for its people.

It is neither in the interest of regional peace and security nor in the interest of the ongoing peace process that this group of people should lose hope in the possibility of achieving a peaceful settlement to the Middle East conflict particularly now that we witness the catastrophic results of the failure or collapse of peace operations in respect of a number of regional and national conflicts.

It was due to this sense of responsibility and a sincere desire for a just, comprehensive and lasting peace that the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Arab States, including my own country, responded positively to the American-Russian peace initiative. My country has participated in the Madrid Peace Conference and in all committees arising from that Conference, both on the bilateral and on the multilateral levels. Jordan, indeed, has been the only party to the negotiations which has never missed a single meeting since the start of the ongoing peace process.

The Madrid Conference has been a glimmer of light in the bleakness of the explosive fait accompli situation that has continued to cast its shadow over the Middle East for so many years now. Hence, the warm welcome and true support for the Conference by the whole world. It was hoped that the glimmer of hope would become a bright and shining light once the clouds of conflict were dissipated. The Madrid Conference has indeed been a breach in the solid wall between the Arabs and Israel that has become more and more solid over the past 25 years of occupation and all the additional unpleasant complications that that occupation entailed.

(Mr. Abu Odeh, Jordan)

After 13 months of direct negotiations between the Arabs and Israel, my delegation would have hoped to be able to give the members the good news that that wall had collapsed. Unfortunately, we are unable to do so. All we can do is point out the following preliminary indications that may be termed comforting: first, the negotiations continue to restart after each round; secondly, the United Nations, represented by the Office of the Secretary-General, participated, for the first time, in the last round of multilateral talks; thirdly, the negotiating parties have started to put forward proposals in writing, which means that the negotiators have become a fellowship of professionals bent on finding solutions to common problems; fourthly, the Jordanian and Israeli parties have come closer to an agreement on their agenda; and fifthly, the Israelis have for the first time participated in the work of the Refugee Committee alongside Palestinians from the diaspora.

These indications, no matter how few and how slight they may be, could have been looked upon as positive developments had they not been overshadowed by a number of Israeli policies and measures that undermine any such positive impression and contradict Israel's alleged wish to search for a peaceful settlement on the basis of Security Council resolution 242 (1967). Some of these policies and measures are as follows:

First, the new Israeli Government's declaration of its intention to halt building what it calls political settlements while going ahead with the construction of what it calls security settlements. We all know that settlements in the occupied territories, regardless of the name they are called by, are illegal, and that to go on building them is a continuing violation of Security Council resolution 242 (1967), which is the basis on

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which the negotiations are being conducted. Furthermore, more settlements will increase the number of settlers, who are known for their opposition to the land-for-peace formula. In this context, the following text from the Torah comes to mind:

> "Woe unto to them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth!" (Holy Bible, Isaiah 5:8)

Secondly, Israel has not yet revoked its decision to annex the Syrian Golan Heights and Arab Jerusalem, to which Security Council resolution 242 (1967) applies in the same way that it applies to the rest of the occupied Palestinian territories just as it applied to the Sinai peninsula. Israel occupied all those territories by force as an outcome of the same war; it was expected that Israel would rescind both annexation decisions when it started to negotiate a peaceful settlement to the dispute.

Thirdly, Israel still holds back from committing itself to applying the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 to the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Fourthly, Israel continues to pursue horrendous practices that could never be appropriate for an occupying Power participating in peace negotiations.

I do not wish to list those horrendous Israeli practices; they are described in the report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices (A/47/509) as well as in the report from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (A/47/13) and are well known to you. However, I will give one specific example: the Israeli policy of impeding contacts between the various Palestinian population centres

(Mr. Abu Odeh, Jordan)

in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and compelling people to obtain permits when they want to move from one place to another. These restrictions have reached the point where some people are being denied access to holy shrines for purposes of worship.

As you can see curbing these policies and halting these measures fall within the jurisdiction of the United Nations, a fact which forces my delegation to reaffirm the necessity for the continued shouldering by the United Nations of its responsibilities and the need for the United Nations to be alert to what is going on in the occupied territories. Neither the convening of the Madrid Conference nor the ongoing negotiations could justify absence by the United Nations from the scene or any slackness in following the situation closely so long as the Israeli occupation of the occupied Arab territories continues. Otherwise, the Madrid Conference would become a cover for Israel to continue to pursue its policy of changing realities on the ground.

It is absolutely true that the Israeli Government, the Israeli political parties and the Israeli press are still chanting "peace" in the ears of region and of the whole world. At this session of the General Assembly, we have heard an Israeli statesman speak of his rosy dreams for the future once peace is achieved between the Arabs and Israel. We cannot but share those rosy dreams; we too attach great hopes to peace, particularly as it would come after almost five decades of conflict. However, rosy dreams of peace, when they come from an Israeli statesman, require us on the other side of the wall to make the following observations:

(Mr. Abu Odeh, Jordan)

First, dreams, unless they are accompanied by action, may become catastrophic for the dreamer. Action must be convincing and in keeping with the dream or the idea. In other words, deed and word should be compatible with each other. Hubert Humphrey once said that "ideas come before facts". If we consider dreams of peace to be the abstract idea, we should expect Israel's deeds to be consistent with that idea and not contradictory to it.

(Mr. Abu Odeh, Jordan)

We hope that Israel will initiate policies that are in harmony with its declamations about peace. For our part, we, the Arabs, have taken many steps that are compatible with our quest for peace.

We did this when the Arab States accepted Security Council resolution 242 (1967) which implies the principle of the acceptance of Israel as one of the States of the region. This was a substantial departure from our pre-June 1967 position. We did the same when, in 1988, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) accepted Security Council resolution 242 (1967) and when we agreed to participate in direct negotiations with Israel. All these steps, as the Assembly knows, have been in response to Israeli demands.

Secondly, the rosy, peace dreams described by Israel are fundamentally based on its aspirations for regional cooperation that would be in the interest of all the peoples of the region, in other words, cooperation between neighbours. Our cultural heritage in the region tells us that a true neighbour is a neighbour who owns what he holds and not a neighbour who is a tenant. No matter how long a tenant's stay might last, it is of a temporary nature, and mutual understanding should take place between neighbours who are owners. How could Israel expect neighbourly cooperation if it wants its Palestinian neighbour to be a tenant and not an owner of its own land? And how does Israel expect mutual understanding with its other neighbour while it unjustly intends to keep the neighbour's backyard at its own disposal?

Finally, the most important condition for the success of the ongoing negotiations within the framework of the Madrid Conference is hope - the hope of the negotiating parties that negotiations will eventually lead to a just and comprehensive peace that will be acceptable to future generations.

Undoubtedly, one of the factors which nurture this hope is that the United Nations is committed and will continue to be committed to reaching

(Mr. Abu Odeh, Jordan)

peace based on its resolutions, the foremost of which is resolution 242 (1967). That is why my delegation wishes to reiterate Jordan's commitment to the success of the ongoing peace process. My delegation also attaches great importance to the role of the United Nations and its efforts. My statement is only a sincere attempt to draw attention to some facts and to highlight some ideas which we hope will contribute to the serious endeavours being made to achieve peace. We hope that the Madrid Conference will be more fortunate than Security Council resolution 242 (1967), in producing its prospective yield before its silver jubilee is due.

Mr. MUSUKA (Zambia): Forty-five years ago the General Assembly adopted resolution 181 (II), by which it partitioned the land of Palestine in order to establish two separate States, a Jewish State and a Palestinian State. To date, however, only the Jewish State of Israel exists while a Palestinian State is yet to be established. This long-delayed implementation of that historic resolution continues to be a matter of concern to the international community and a serious challenge to the United Nations resolve to respect its own decisions.

There can be no doubt that this unjust situation constitutes for the Palestinian people a denial of their legitimate rights. As such it is an issue that evokes strong emotions among the Palestinian people. In this regard the Assembly has repeatedly stated that the question of Palestine is the core of the Middle East problem. To this end I reaffirm Zambia's view that there can be no lasting peace in the Middle East unless the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people are justly addressed.

In 1983 the General Assembly called for an International Peace Conference on the Middle East to be held under the auspices of the United Nations. Since then it has reaffirmed this call. We believe that such a conference, in which

(Mr. Musuka, Zambia)

all parties to the conflict - including the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) - would participate on an equal footing, is long overdue. The conference should be based on the letter and spirit of Security Council resolutions, in particular resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

By their recognition in 1988 of Israel's right to exist, the Palestinian people manifested their readiness to negotiate in good faith in order to close this sad chapter of history once and for all. We are similarly encouraged by the pronouncements of the new Israeli Government regarding the principle of land for peace and its suspension of the construction of settlements in the occupied territories. However, Israel is under an obligation to undertake specific measures in order to inspire confidence that it is committed to a just, comprehensive and negotiated solution. As demanded by the Security Council, Israel should as a matter of urgency withdraw unconditionally from all the territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem. In our view such a move would go a long way towards the attainment of a lasting solution to the Middle East problem. In this regard we call on the parties concerned to respect the right of all States, including Israel, to live in peace within secure and internationally recognized boundaries.

Zambia has welcomed the ongoing negotiations which commenced at Madrid on 30 October 1991. It should be noted, however, that the role of the United Nations in the search for peace cannot be overlooked or marginalized. We believe that the two processes - namely, the international peace conference on the Middle East under the auspices of the United Nations and the Madrid initiative - can play complementary roles in achieving peace in the Middle East.

(Mr. Musuka, Zambia)

The end of the cold war era has had a positive effect on the resolution of many issues hitherto considered hotbeds of tension. In those areas, confrontation has given way to compromise and accommodation, thus making it possible to achieve progress. There is no doubt that the Middle East too can benefit from this positive international political climate.

I have just outlined what we believe should be done to bring peace to the Middle East region. In the meantime, Israel should take the steps necessary for the restoration of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the Palestinian people living under occupation. As recommended by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People in its report (A/47/35), Israel should immediately cease all land confiscations and settlement activities, release political prisoners, end deportations and restore the freedom of movement and other civil liberties of the Palestinians. It is also important that the Government of Israel take immediate measures to protect the Palestinians in the occupied territories in accordance with the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. That is an obligation on the part of Israel.

The Assembly has repeatedly and unequivocally set out the essential principles for a comprehensive settlement of the Middle East problem, as follows: Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Palestinian and Arab territories; the security of all States in the region; the dismantling of Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian and Arab territories; a permanent solution to the problem of Palestinian refugees; and guaranteed freedom of access to holy places and religious buildings and sites.

Zambia has repeatedly stated its view that it is in Israel's own long-term interest to negotiate peace with the Palestinian people. Reliance

(Mr. Musuka, Zambia)

on military might as a guarantee of peace is self-deluding. We therefore call on Israel to seize this propitious moment and engage the representatives of the Palestinian people in serious negotiations aimed at ending the occupation. The right to self-determination and national independence is sacrosanct. The United Nations should, in fulfilment of its responsibilities, ensure that this right is fully exercised by the Palestinian people.

In conclusion, I wish to reaffirm Zambia's total commitment to the realization of the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and national independence. Through the years of occupation, they have suffered a lot. The international community has a binding responsibility to end that suffering.

Mr. CISSE (Senegal) (interpretation from French): For decades the situation in the Middle East has been a major source of the international community's concern, and especially the concern of the United Nations, on which the history of the region has conferred primary responsibility in the quest for a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the crisis.

Despite the efforts that have been made, the Middle East region is still marked by deep wounds and by the repeated effects of a conflict where the stakes are many and complex. The question of Palestine lies at the core of that conflict.

At the dawn of a new era in international relations, in which there is increased agreement on the need to strengthen international peace and security and to ensure greater respect for law and justice, it has never been more necessary for the United Nations to keep the quest for a resolution of the Middle East question high on its list of priorities.

In that regard it is indispensable for the United Nations to continue its efforts to ensure the implementation of its resolutions on the question of

(Mr. Cissé, Senegal)

Palestine and on the situation in the Middle East, particularly Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which in the final analysis form the basis for an internationally acceptable solution to the conflict.

For more than a year the international community has been following with legitimate hope the progress of the Middle East peace process launched in the framework of the Madrid Conference. Although the process does not fully conform to the recommendations of many of the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council, it has the merit of having initiated a dialogue between all the parties concerned with the conflict.

It is therefore important that, despite the obstacles and fears, the Madrid process be maintained and strengthened and that the role of the United Nations be expanded to guarantee respect for international law and, in particular, to guarantee Israel's withdrawal from the occupied Arab and Palestinian territories, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif, and the restoration of the inalienable and unassailable rights of the Palestinian people.

For nearly half a century developments in this conflict have shown us that obstinate attempts to perpetuate the illegal occupation of territory in contempt of the law can only endanger the security of all the countries of the region and that reconciliation and the building of a just and lasting peace are possible when all the parties concerned show realism and political courage.

True to its convictions, Senegal will continue as in the past to work to increase the firmness and consistency of the United Nations on the question of the Middle East, and to pursue ongoing efforts to make justice and peace prevail for everyone in the region.

Mr. KHARRAZI (Islamic Republic of Iran): Tension and crisis continue to plague the Middle East. The ray of hope that certain quarters in the Middle East and beyond have tried to project has failed to catch the attention of those who are seriously and genuinely concerned about the sources of instability and tension in the Middle East. Those sources include, on the one hand, chronic problems like aggression and occupation, and, on the other, a perception of threat as a national security concept, which involves the question of arms control and disarmament.

The Islamic Republic of Iran believes that these chronic problems are interrelated and require an integrated approach by the international community in general and by the people in the Middle East in particular, an approach that is both realistic and just and will lead to stability and tranquillity in the area.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has on many occasions stressed the importance of adhering to the principles of the sovereign equality of States and non-aggression, non-intervention and non-interference in the internal affairs of other States in the conduct of inter-State relations. Had these principles been respected, our region would never have experienced many wars and conflicts during past decades. In fact, one of the clearest cases of aggression from which our region has been suffering over the past 40 years is the continuation of the policies of the Zionist régime towards Palestine and the other Muslim countries.

A few days ago I had the opportunity to elaborate on the situation in Palestine and the crimes that are being committed by the Zionists in the occupied territories. The Zionist regime does not confine itself to the torture and killing of Palestinians and violations of their basic human rights. Moreover, the Golan Heights and southern Lebanon continue to be under

(Mr. Kharrazi, Islamic Republic of Iran)

occupation by the Zionists, despite numerous calls by the international community to halt the aggression. The Muslim people of southern Lebanon are daily the target of heavy bombardment and shelling. The Zionist forces, along with their surrogates in southern Lebanon, continue to pound the villages and harass the defenceless people on the flimsy pretext that the Muslim resistance forces are continuing their struggle against occupation. I wonder what the reaction of the people of southern Lebanon should be to the prolonged and violent occupation of their territory by the Zionists; if not resistance, then what? Who can blame a defenceless people for resisting occupation and aggression?

The Zionist occupation of southern Lebanon has continued for years, despite numerous calls by the international community for the preservation of the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Lebanon within its internationally recognized borders. In the light of Israeli intransigence it is incumbent upon the international community to shoulder its responsibilities to suppress the aggression and take effective measures to terminate the illegal occupation of southern Lebanon and the other occupied territories.

The Zionist regime has realized the benefit it can reap by trying to project international blame elsewhere and share it with others. To that end, the Zionist entity has extensively capitalized on a defeated policy of creating an artificial threat in our region to divert the attention of the international community in general, and the countries of the region in particular, from its atrocities against the Muslim people of Palestine and the other occupied territories. It is a well-established fact that the Zionist regime is behind a propaganda campaign to portray others as the threat to the

(Mr. Kharrazi, Islamic Republic of Iran)

security of the region. It is clear that by promoting that dangerous scheme the Zionist regime has been trying to sow discord among the countries of the region to justify its expansionist designs against neighbouring countries.

I should like to emphasize once more that the recent propaganda sensationalism about Iran's arms procurement is totally untrue. Those who have orchestrated this propaganda campaign are promoting the arms race in the region. We have repeatedly discouraged the arms race, which we believe is detrimental to the security of the region. It is worth noting that Iran's arms expenditures, both in real figures and as a percentage of gross domestic product, are not comparable to those of many other countries in the region.

As the highest officials of my Government and the National Security Council of the Islamic Republic of Iran have said on many occasions, Iran's military strength is geared solely to its defensive purposes and has never been, and never will be, used for expansionism and aggression against others.

Since its inception the Islamic Republic of Iran has emphasized the importance of regional disarmament as a complement to global disarmament for the promotion of regional and international peace and security. Taking into consideration the volatile situation in the Middle East and the efforts being made by the Zionist regime to advance its offensive capabilities, the Islamic Republic of Iran is firmly committed to the establishment of the Middle East as a zone free from nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. Iran, as the initiator of the proposal to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, reiterates its support for any genuine, comprehensive and non-discriminatory initiative to establish such a zone so that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) can expand its verification system to cover all nuclear facilities in the Middle East.

(Mr. Kharrazi, Islamic Republic of Iran)

In the view of the Islamic Republic of Iran, so long as the chronic political problem of aggression and occupation persists in the Middle East and the IAEA has not been able to bring all nuclear facilities in the Middle East under its verification system, every State in the region perceives its national security to be at great risk.

While the removal of aggression and the reversal of the arms race in the Middle East would clearly constitute the imperative priorities of any comprehensive approach to the problems of the Middle East, the necessity for respect for the wishes of the people, through a strengthening of democratic institutions, cannot be overlooked. Recently we have been witnessing such a positive trend in our region.

(Mr. Kharrazi, Islamic Republic of Iran)

We welcome this positive development, which is gaining momentum in the Middle East. We believe that respect for the will of people would help our endeavours towards strengthening the stability and security of our region. The Islamic Republic of Iran, which was established on the basis of a general referendum, has held more than 15 national elections in the past 14 years, even during the eight years of the Iran-Iraq war.

Before concluding, I should like to touch upon our immediate neighborhood, that is, the Persion Gulf region, which has been beset by two destructive wars. The Islamic Republic of Iran is deeply desirous of taking every step in cooperation with its neighbours to prevent any further recurrence of those tragedies, through strengthening and expanding good neighbourly relations among all countries of the Persion Gulf subregion of the Middle East. Dependent on a secure and stable Persian Gulf for its development and prosperity, Iran has endeavoured to consult and cooperate with its neighbours in order to accomplaish that goal. This can be achieved only through cooperation and on the basis of respect for principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity, inviolability of international borders, non-resort to force in the settlement of disputes and non-interference in the internal affairs of other States.

Mr. ELARABY (Egypt) (interpretation from Arabic): A historic peace process that aims at reaching a settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict started about a year ago with the convening of the Madrid Peace Conference under the co-sponsorship of the United States and the Russian Federation, with the participation of all concerned parties, on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). The essence of both resolutions is

(Mr. Elaraby, Egypt)

the non-admissibility of the acquisition of land by force and the establishment of comprehensive and just peace in the Middle East.

The peace process included the initiation of multilateral negotiations on the ways and means of regional and international cooperation following the establishment of peace to address the problems facing the Middle East region, such as the problem of the Palestinian refugees, arms control, economic cooperation, protection of the environment and the exploitation of the limited water resources of the region.

Egypt has enumerated in detail the principles it considers to be the prerequisites of comprehensive peace founded on security and justice for all, as follows:

First, settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, which is indivisible, has four mainstays: return of the occupied Arab territories, exercise by the Palestinian people of their rights, the right of all parties to security, and the need for regional cooperation within a framework of peace.

Secondly, inescapable commitment to the implementation of the Security Council resolutions which constitute the frame of reference of the negotiating process. The quintessence of those resolutions is the principle of land for peace. Those resolutions must apply to all parties without any exception.

Thirdly, the special status of the city of Al-Quds. In this respect, we emphasize that eastern Jerusalem is part of the territories occupied since 1967 and is subject to the principles of settlement that apply to all other occupied territories. Israel, as the occupying Power, cannot confiscate the future of Al-Quds or decree, unilaterally, any change to the legal status and nature of the city. Al-Quds should be one of the main areas of negotiating for peace both in regard to interim arrangements and the final stage of Israeli-Palestinian negotiation.

(Mr. Elaraby, Egypt)

Fourthly, interim arrangements should not prejudice the right of the Palestinian people to administer its affairs to choose its future and to determine their own destiny.

Fifthly, the problem of the Palestinians who became refugees after the 1948 war and those who became displaced after the 1967 war should be dealt with in conformity with the resolutions of the United Nations, particularly General Assembly resolution 194 (III) and Security Council resolution 237 (1967).

Sixthly, Israel should refrain, during the negotiations, from all acts and measures that may have a negative effect on the progress of these negotiations, particularly repressive practices against the Palestinian people in the occupied territories. All parties should endeavour to create an atmosphere of mutual trust to facilitate the success of the negotiations and ensure negotiation in good faith and all seriousness with the aim of accelerating movement towards agreement.

Egypt is aware of the importance of the historic opportunity now afforded the Middle East region. Egypt has played an active role in contributing to its success, a role based on its Arab affiliation and its desire to see peace embrace all parties to the conflict in the Middle East so that the rest of the occupied territories may be freed and the Palestinian people may exercise its legitimate rights.

Egypt has also participated in the multilateral negotiations in the belief that progress towards resolving the problems of Palestinian refugees and arms control could contribute positively to the establishment of a durable peace. The achievement of that peace can lead to cooperation between the countries of the region in facing up to other common problems.

(Mr. Elaraby, Egypt)

The problem of security in the Middle East is of the utmost importance with regard to the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the achievement of the region's stability and the prosperity of its peoples. The spread of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, poses a serious threat to the region's security and creates an obstacle that impedes the establishment of comprehensive peace between the States of the region.

Egypt has put forward an initiative that aims at eliminating all weapons of mass destruction in the region. There is international consensus in support of the draft resolution submitted by Egypt every year on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. It is no secret that the establishment of such a zone at present requires no more than acceptance by one country, namely Israel, to accede to the non-proliferation Treaty and to place its nuclear facilities under the international guarantees regime, since the rest of the countries in the region have already accepted to do so. Now that direct negotiations on arms control in the context of the peace process have begun between all concerned parties in the region, all pretexts and excuses that impede ridding the region of nuclear weapons have lost justification.

(Mr. Elaraby, Egypt)

The Arab countries, collectively, have declared their willingness to deal positively with the Convention on Chemical Weapons within the context of the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East and in the measure that Israel responds to international demands concerning the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

The new Israeli Government has declared its commitment to search positively for peace. It has also taken some positive, though limited, steps towards confidence building with the Palestinian people. It has thus tried to impart a measure of credibility to Israel's policy which, originally, aimed at wasting time and impeding movement towards agreement.

This credibility, which we call for, requires Israel to respect its legal obligations which arise from the Fourth Geneva Convention, and also requires the halting of all forms of violation of the rights of the Palestinian people as well as the halting of settlement building and of all measures that aim at changing the economic and demographic character of the occupied territories.

The recent positive developments in the international climate and the increasing role of the United Nations in dealing with regional and international problems constitute a motive power which should have a direct impact on the current peace process.

The invitation to the United Nations to take part in the multilateral negotiations bespeaks clear recognition on the part of the concerned parties of the importance of the role that could be played by the international organization in this regard.

Egypt welcomes the decision of the Secretary-General to appoint Ambassador Gharekhan as his Personal Representative at the multilateral negotiations and as coordinator of the role of the United Nations in all working groups emanating from the negotiations.

(Mr. Elaraby, Egypt)

Egypt is confident that the experience and competence of Ambassador Gharekhan will ensure effective participation by the United Nations in the peace process. Experience has shown that the United Nations can play an effective role which contributes to the settlement of regional conflicts.

Consideration could also be given to the many areas in which the United Nations could participate with the aim of achieving peace in the Middle East, such as the protection of the inhabitants of the occupied territories in implementation of Security Council resolution 681 (1990), supervising the carrying out of the arrangements of the transitional period in the occupied territories and the deployment of international observer and peace-keeping forces on the international borders after the withdrawal of Israel, as a sort of confidence-building measure.

In conclusion, I should like to repeat that we have been afforded an important historic opportunity, that may not be repeated, to establish the edifice of a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. All of us have a responsibility to work together in order not to miss this opportunity.

AGENDA ITEM 37 (continued)

STRENGTHENING OF THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS

The PRESIDENT: I would like to inform representatives that I have asked the Permanent Representative of New Zealand, Ambassador Terence Christopher O'Brien, to conduct consultations on my behalf, as Chairman of an open-ended working group on agenda item 37, with all interested delegations in order to prepare an agreed text of a draft resolution under the item.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.